

## **MAKING THE MOST OF THE JOB FAIR EXPERIENCE**

*by Robbie Miller Kaplan, author of How to Say It In Your Job Search (Prentice Hall Press, 2002)*

Job fairs offer big benefits to job seekers. You have an opportunity to network, identify what employers are seeking in applicants, participate in actual interviews, practice your interview skills, and maybe - get a job offer! If nothing else you can apply what you learn to more clearly target your resume for positions of interest.

How can you prepare and maximize the job fair experience? It's helpful to prepare as if it were a job interview; bring along professional copies of your resume, practice responding to interview questions, and dress as if you were attending a job interview.

You'll make the best impression if you research the organizations prior to the job fair. Get a sense of what is going on with the organization. Are they expanding? Merging? Did they just receive a government contract? Launching a new product? If you have a sense of what is going on, you can craft an appropriate question or, you can read up on the organization to have an idea of who they are and then ask questions to share a bit of their own information with the recruiter or interviewer.

How can you ensure a successful job fair experience? It's good idea to work the entire fair. Begin with organizations of least interest and work up to your top choices. You'll gain more confidence with each experience so you'll be in top form for your top picks. Prepare and introduce yourself to each employer with a 30-second introduction; include what you have been doing, what you are looking for and the skills and experience you want to use.

Always collect business cards and definitely follow up with employers that you interviewed with if you are interested in them. You can also solicit feedback on your resume to ensure it is as strong as it can be. While waiting in line, read some of the brochures you pick up or an industry publication.

And don't just network with employers; network with other applicants. Find out what they are looking for, share a lead with an organization that is not a fit but may fit the applicant, and visa versa. Follow up with individuals you met so you can expand your network. You never know where or when the perfect lead will materialize; make sure you don't miss it.